MISS CYNTHIA.

It was at a little seaside place in West Cornwall that I met with Miss Cynthia Treleven. I never saw her before, and have never seen her since; yet in the short time of our acquaintance I think I was a witness of the one romance—the one pitiful little tragedy—of Miss Cynthia's life.

She was certainly a middle-aged lady, and yet that term gives altogether a wrong idea of her. Though her youth was past, there was still something girlish about her. She had preserved the shyness and innocence of youth, though its freshness and bloom had fled long ago; the bashfulness that was pretty at eighteen was a little awkward now; the blush that came so readily to her thin cheek was more painful than becoming. I don't think she could ever have been pretty, but there was something taking about her, and I found Miss Cynthia a very interesting study at first. She was far younger than I, although her actual years must have numbered nearly the double of mine.

We happened to be staying at the same hotel—I with my mother, and Miss Cynthia with her brother, a stout Cornish squire, his handsome daughter, and a young man whose relationship I could not fix at all. He was a handsome young fellow, tall and dark-haired, with heavy, sleepy eyes; and he lounged about all day, in a fashion that made me long to shake him. Nearly all his time was spent lying on his back on the turf, smoking, or slouching about the little place, watching the coasters in and out of the harbor, and yawning. A French novel was always sticking out of his pocket; I never saw him read anything else.

"I detest that young man," I said with much emphasis to my mother one day, when we were seated on the downs with our books and knitting, with a good view of the gentleman in question lounging on the breakwater below us.

"I don't think he can be altogether bad," replied my mother gently. "There must be some good in a young man who is as devoted to his aunt as he is. I notice him always very attentive to Miss Treleven."

"I am sure she is not his aunt," I cried. "Is he really attentive to her?"

"Very much so, indeed," said my mother. "I think there must be some relationship, as it would be absurd to imagine anything else between them."

That evening I happened to pick up Miss Cynthia's book for her, and so commenced our acquaintance. We were seated in the hotel garden, in the soft summer twilight, and Miss Cynthia talked a good deal, in the nervous, flurried way that shy people have. Her niece Maud had not been very well for some time, she told me, and so they had been trying what a little change of air would do for her.

"And I like to see a little of the world now and then," she said hesitatingly. "Don't you think one grows a little old-fashioned, living in the country all the year round? We do not see much society at Polellan, and, for my part, I like to have some idea of the fashions."

I could scarcely help a smile as I glanced at her slim, lank figure and faded face. There was nothing fashionable about Miss Cynthia. She had curiously preserved the exact style of feature and manner which one sees in the Keepsakes and Books of Beauty which were young with her; and the style which was suggested by her appearance was that of limp braids, with a rose behind one ear, sloping shoulders with a scarf trailing off them, and sandalled slippers.

They had made quite a little tour, Miss Cynthia went on, and Maud was much better already.

"And does her brother like it, too?" I asked.

"Her brother? Oh, you mean Mr. Houston. No; he is no relation at all—that is—I should say, he is only a friend," said Miss Cynthia, nervously. "We made his acquaintance at Penzance, and he has formed one of our party since."

"He seems to find it rather dull," I remarked.

"Do you think so? Oh, no! I assure you he is delighted with the place," fluttered my companion, with a painful blush. "He doesn't care much for exertion, perhaps; but he says it is enough for him simply to live in a place like this."

"He is rather young to talk like that," I hazarded. "He can't be more than twenty-five or six?"

"Oh!" cried Miss Cynthia, "he is much older than that! I am sure he is much older; but then," she went on, twisting the corner of her shawl in her nervous fingers, "I think it is so difficult really to tell age. Some people look so much older than they are, and some so much younger. Don't you think so? Mr. Houston says that years have really very little to do with age, and it is only experience and knowledge that really signify."

Poor Miss Cynthia! According to that maxim she was certainly no more than eighteen.

"For example," she said hastily, with the curious boldness of bashful people, who often make confidences that stronger souls would shrink from—"for example, I am sure you would never guess my real age. Now, I wish you would tell me; how old should you think I really am?"

This was rather sudden. I gasped. There was nothing for it but prevarication; and with that anxious, faded face waiting eagerly upon my words, I said:

"Well, it is really hard to tell; but are you thirty yet?"

"There!" cried Miss Cynthia, beaming with sudden delight. "I was right; it is impossible to guess quite correctly. I really am a little more than that, but appearances are sometimes deceptive, are they not? Is that you, Maud?" as a tall figure approached through the twilight. "Do you want me, my love?"

"It is too damp for you to be out, dear," said the girl. "Do come in now."

She spoke in a soft, pleasant voice; but I noticed a scrutinizing glance at me as she came near, as if to see who it was that kept Miss Cynthia out so late. She acknowledged her aunt's nervous introduction with a very slight bow, and passed her arm through hers to lead her indoors.

I remained on my seat a little longer, meditating. Poor Miss Cynthia! Her secret was easily read, and I scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry over her; but I couldn't get her out of my head. From where I sat I could see the masts of the vessels that were lying by the lock, ready to go out with the next tide; the broad downs rose on the other side of the harbor, and I could see the constant flash of the white breakers at the edge of the grayness of the ocean. The air was full of the sound of the sea; it formed a sort of background to all other sounds of the summer evening; the distant voices of children, the stars and greetings of passers-by, and the thin twang of the church clock that struck the half hours and quarters high above the scattered little town.

Miss Cynthia's affairs seemed fantastic and rather ridiculous to me while I sat there in the twilight. As I mused, the scent of a cigar floated upon the air, and I heard a step down the road by the church. I recognized Mr. Houston as he lounged past the garden where I sat, with his hands in his pockets and his cap slouched over his handsome eyes. I was sitting with my back toward the hotel, but as I gathered up my shawls and rose to go in, I saw that some one else had been watching the young man. A girl stood at the drawing-room window, a dark, handsome, sulky-looking girl, who was watching intently the lounging figure from under her straight-drawn brows. It was Maud Treleven.

I had not very much to do just then, and I spent a good deal of time watching the curious little drama that unrolled itself before me. It seemed to me that a great deal of it was explained very pitifully when I heard from acquaintances that Miss Cynthia was quite an heiress in a small way.

Five hundred a year was a nice little income for an idle young man to pick up; and he certainly devoted to her all the time that he could spare from his novels and cigars. It was not hard work for him; a very little went a great way with poor Miss Cynthia, who, as she confided to me one day upon the sands, had never had a lover before.

He had brought her a little bunch of flowers that morning, and she held them in her hand as she talked to me, with a glance at them now and then so full of pride and pleasure that it went to my heart.

"You see, my dear," she was saying, "we always lived very quietly in my dear father's lifetime, and saw no society. It is hard upon a girl, I think. And yet, perhaps, when one is not quite a girl, the happiness seems greater. I never thought——" and Miss Cynthia's voice broke suddenly, and she looked straight out to sea with moistened eyes.

I looked at her hopelessly. She had begun to affect a certain juvenility of style which sat very badly upon her. She had curled her front hair lately, and as it was thin and soft it would not friz but straggled in limp strands upon her forehead. A sailor hat was perched upon her head—exactly the same sort of hat as that which Maud Treleven wore upon her heavy black coils—and she wore a cross-over blouse which accentuated the flatness and angularity of her thin figure. It was hard to think of her as the heroine of a love affair.

"Dear Miss Cynthia," I said gently (I was so sorry for her), "I think you may be right, and that one may be happier to be engaged late in life; but don't you think one ought to be very sure, very certain, about it? A girl may get over things that an older person cannot, you know. One wants to be sure."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Cynthia, with a happy smile—"very sure."

There was nothing more to be said. And presently she went on:

"I don't think you know Mr. Houston very well, do you?"

I said that I did not.

"No; he is not very easy to know. He says himself that very few people understand him. My niece Maud, for example, dislikes him very much. It is a pity, for she is such a dear girl, and it makes it so uncomfortable. I assure you she will scarcely speak to him, and is quite short with me if I but mention his name to her. And my brother, too, is very unkind. He says very cruel things sometimes."

I had noticed that Maud Treleven was almost rude in her behavior to the young man, and that she threw every obstacle that she could in the way of his intercourse with her aunt. To Miss Cynthia herself she showed the tenderest affection, but she was always on the watch, and Mr. Houston seemed uneasy and awkward under the glance of her black eyes. Therefore it seemed the more extraordinary to me when, in two figures coming slowly along the sands toward us, I recognized Miss Treleven and her aunt's admirer.

We were seated under the shadow of an advancing ledge of rock which ran out into the sand in long points and reefs, and they passed by without noticing us, Miss Cynthia had not seen them; she was very short-sighted, and they passed at some distance. We sat silent for some little time—I busy with my knitting, and Miss Cynthia fidgetting about in her usual nervous way—when suddenly a man's voice struck upon our ears from the other side of the long jagged reef behind us——

"Hard? I should think it is hard—for me. Why you should care about it, though, I can't think. You threw me over first, or I should never have thought of it."

In a moment I understood. Mr. Houston and Miss Treleven had come up the other side quite unconscious of our presence. I half rose, but Miss Cynthia sat quite still, and I sat down again doubtfully.

"Don't you understand that I will not bear to see her so deceived?" said an indignant girlish voice. "How can you do it? It is shameful, disgraceful! I wonder you have the face to speak to her at all before me—knowing you as I do."

"And what do you know, then?"

"I know that you chose to make love to me once, thinking I was the heiress of my grandmother's money," replied Maud Treleven, with a scornful laugh. "I know that I found out the reason of your devotion, and 'threw you over,' as you call it, before you had time to find out your mistake and throw me over instead. And I know that, still anxious to get the money, you have made my dear old aunt"—(Miss Cynthia drew in her breath quickly)—"believe that you care for her, and you are going to marry her for the sake of it. But you shall not. I will tell her everything myself sooner than see it."

"You may tell her what you like. She will believe me, not you," said Mr. Houston sullenly.

"That's the cruelty of it! Oh, you villain! You mean, treacherous villain!"

"Come, Maud," said he, with a roughened voice, "that's enough of calling names. Now listen to me. I'll tell you the truth. I did ask you to marry me because I thought you had money. But I got to care about you so much that I would never have given you up, even if I knew you hadn't a penny, only you never gave me the chance to tell you so. You would not hear me. I didn't know why you threw me over. Well, then I heard it was your aunt who had all the money. Why shouldn't I marry her? I thought. She isn't a bad old thing. I don't dislike her at all. But look here, it's you I want. I don't care a hang for all her money if you would only have me."

"How dare you insult me?" she cried. I could hear her quick, angry breathing. "Do you think I would take you—now?"

"You could make a better fellow of me, Maud."

"And she—oh, it is too cruel! She thinks you love her. She is so happy."

"Never mind her. Think of yourself. You did care for me at first, Maud." The young man's voice had sunk to a pleading tone which poor Miss Cynthia had never heard before. I think she had forgotten I was there. She sat rigidly quiet, still looking out to sea beyond me. I never saw anything like the dreadful despair of her eyes, and she still held her little bunch of flowers, tightly clasped in her thin, trembling hand. They were drooping already. I did not dare to move or speak; and the sunlight fell all around us, and the murmur of the sea filled the air, and the voices went on still behind the rocks.

"I will not hear you," said the girl. I could hear her hasty rising, and the clatter of the loose stones that fell as she moved. Her voice sounded as if she was crying. "And you shall not make Aunt Cynthia miserable—poor old darling!"

"Take me yourself, then," said the young man. "I tell you it's either you or her."

They were moving away. We could no longer hear the words distinctly, and soon even the sound of them died away. And then Miss Cynthia moved. She looked away from the sea at last, and down at the drooping flowers in her hand. Then suddenly she let them fall, buried her face in her hands, and burst into a dreadful weeping. Her thin, lank figure shook with the violence of her sobs; her poor, silly little sailor hat got pushed all on one side; and I got up softly and went away, for one should not look on at a breaking heart, and I could do nothing to comfort her. I looked back once, and she was still sitting there—a very pitiful figure in the bright sunlight.

I did not see Miss Cynthia again that day. She had a bad headache, her niece told me, and did not care to come down to dinner. Miss Treleven had very heavy eyes herself, and I noticed that she had not a word to say to Mr. Houston, who looked as black as thunder.

But the next morning I saw Miss Cynthia; she was sitting in the garden, upon the seat where we first made acquaintance; and as I came near her I was astonished at the change in her appearance. She wore a quiet gray dress and the youthful fringe was gone; her thin, colorless hair was brushed smoothly down, and she had a bonnet on instead of the wide, flowery hat she had always worn in the garden. But the change was more than this. Something was gone that had been there; I think it was hope.

Nearly all the people staying at the hotel had gone upon a long excursion, and she was all alone in the bright morning. As I sat down beside her I saw that she held a letter in her hands, and she began to speak very quietly—not at all in her usual nervous, flurried way.

"I want you—I want you, my dear, to read this," handing me the letter; "you will understand."

I took it silently and read it. It was an offer of marriage signed "James Houston," and I burst out into an indignant exclamation. But Miss Cynthia put her hand on mine—it felt very hot and dry.

"Please—please do not say anything. I want you to stay with me. I wrote a note to ask him to come here. I think I can do it better with you by me."

As she spoke her hand began to tremble, and a spot of bright red mounted to her cheek. I followed here glance, and saw the tall figure of Mr. Houston coming up the garden. He eyed me sulkily as he came near.

"I am afraid I intrude," said he, lifting his hat. "But I understood——"

"Yes, certainly, Mr. Houston," said Miss Cynthia. "I asked you to come here. But the presnce of this young lady need not interfere. I think—I think there has been a little mistake."

She spoke in rather a high voice, and was holding my hand tight. Men are very stupid; I do not think Mr. Houston saw how she was trembling.

"Mistake?" he said, flushing a dark red all over his handsome face. "I—I don't think——"

"I hope, indeed, that it has been a mistake," said Miss Cynthia, looking very straight at him; "for I should be sorry to think you could suppose that I could really entertain such a ridiculous proposition. You are a young man, Mr. Houston, and I—I am getting an old woman."

She was very brave, but at the last sentence her voice began to waver, and she stopped suddenly and clasped her hands firmly together to steady them.

I never saw any man look so confused and thoroughly ashamed of himself as the young fellow standing before us. He looked at me angrily; I knew he would have given anything to get me away. He opened his mouth to begin a sentence, but only stammered and muttered something about devotion and his feelings. But Miss Cynthia had steadied herself and interrupted him.

"I am sure you must see yourself, Mr. Houston, how very absurd such a thing would be. I cannot believe you are serious—it would be ridiculous."

And Miss Cynthia began to laugh shrilly. I did not like to hear her; it was difficult for her to stop when she had once begun.

"I have sometimes been a little amused," she said, with trembling lips. "And do you know I sometimes thought that it was—that it was Maud that you really admired—and that you were making interest with her old aunt, as you were afraid to speak to her yourself. And if it were so, indeed I should be very glad. Maud is my heiress, Mr. Houston, and I should be glad to devote all I have to making her happy. As for me," said Miss Cynthia, quietly, "I am an old woman, and all the interest I have now is in seeing my dear niece happy."

Mr. Houston had turned very pale.

"Oh, Miss Cynthia—what can I say?" he began.

I think some real emotion stirred his selfish soul; but before he could say any more another voice broke in.

"What are you saying about me, Aunt Cynthia? I heard my name, I am sure."

Miss Treleven had come quietly round the corner of a side path and stood close beside us, with a flushed face and sparkling eyes.

"What are you saying about me, dear?" she repeated, kneeling down by her aunt and putting her arm round her protectingly.

Miss Cynthia faltered now, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Maud, my darling," she said, hesitatingly, "Mr. Houston and I have been talking about you. My dear, I grudge nothing in the world to make you happy. And I have always taken a great interest in Mr. Houston," she added, with gentle dignity. "I will go in now, I think. I am a little tired. You young people can have a little talk together by yourselves."

"But I am going in with you," said her niece, rising to her feet. "Thank you, Aunt Cynthia, but I have nothing to say to Mr. Houston, and I am sure he can have nothing to say to me. Nothing," she repeated, with emphasis, looking straight at the dark, handsome face before her.

I think I was almost a little sorry for him then; he had such a cowed, beaten look. But he recovered himself quickly.

"In that case," said he defiantly, "I will wish you all good morning."

And with a hasty crunch of his heel upon the gravel, he lifted his hat and strode away down the long path and out of our sight.

"Oh, Maud!" began Miss Cynthia.

"And, oh, auntie! Did you think I would leave you—for him? I shall never, never be married, darling, and I'll stay with you always."

And Miss Treleven burst out crying, and buried her face upon Miss Cynthia's thin shoulder.

They went away next morning, and I have never seen or heard of them since. But a few months afterward I saw in the Times the notice of the marriage of James Houston to Lavinia, widow of Sir Thomas Stubbs of Moor Park, Hants. So I concluded that Mr. Houston had at last been successful in gaining that fortune in pursuit of which he had broken Miss Cynthia's heart.—Cassell's Magazine.

TWO SHADOWS.

The sun's in a cloud,
The morning is dreary,
The way is too long,
The feet are too weary,
The friend is not kind,
And smiles are not shining
The roses and robins
Are paling and pining,
That hour is the saddest
From May day to Yule
When little Dolores
Is going to school.

BEFORE HER.

What is the reason? She turns from the light
And walks in her shadow from morning till night.
The sun is the brightest,
The morn is the clearest,
The burden is lightest,
The friend is the dearest,
The flowers are all waking,
The way is not long,
The birds are all breaking
At once into song,
That hour is the gladdest
From May day to Yule
When little Allegra
Is going to school.

BEHIND HER.

What is the secret? Wherever you find her
The shadow of little Allegra's behind her.
—Mary A. Lathbury in Youth's Companion.

Facial Expression.

In case you have been told that your face is very expressive don't consider that you have been given license to exaggerate the expressive features. The face that speaks volumes is always attractive, but that constitutes no excuse for the style of dancing faces sometimes seen. The impression is conveyed by a row of feminine faces that each woman is endeavoring to attract especial attention to her features.

The best advice to be given such women is: Don't roll your eyes up into your head as if they were marbles. A fine pair of eyes will be utterly ruined by this operation. The girl with a pretty mouth will purse it up into the prettiest bouton and continue the habit until many minute lines form about the lips and the lovely mouth has to be put into the hands of a beauty doctor.

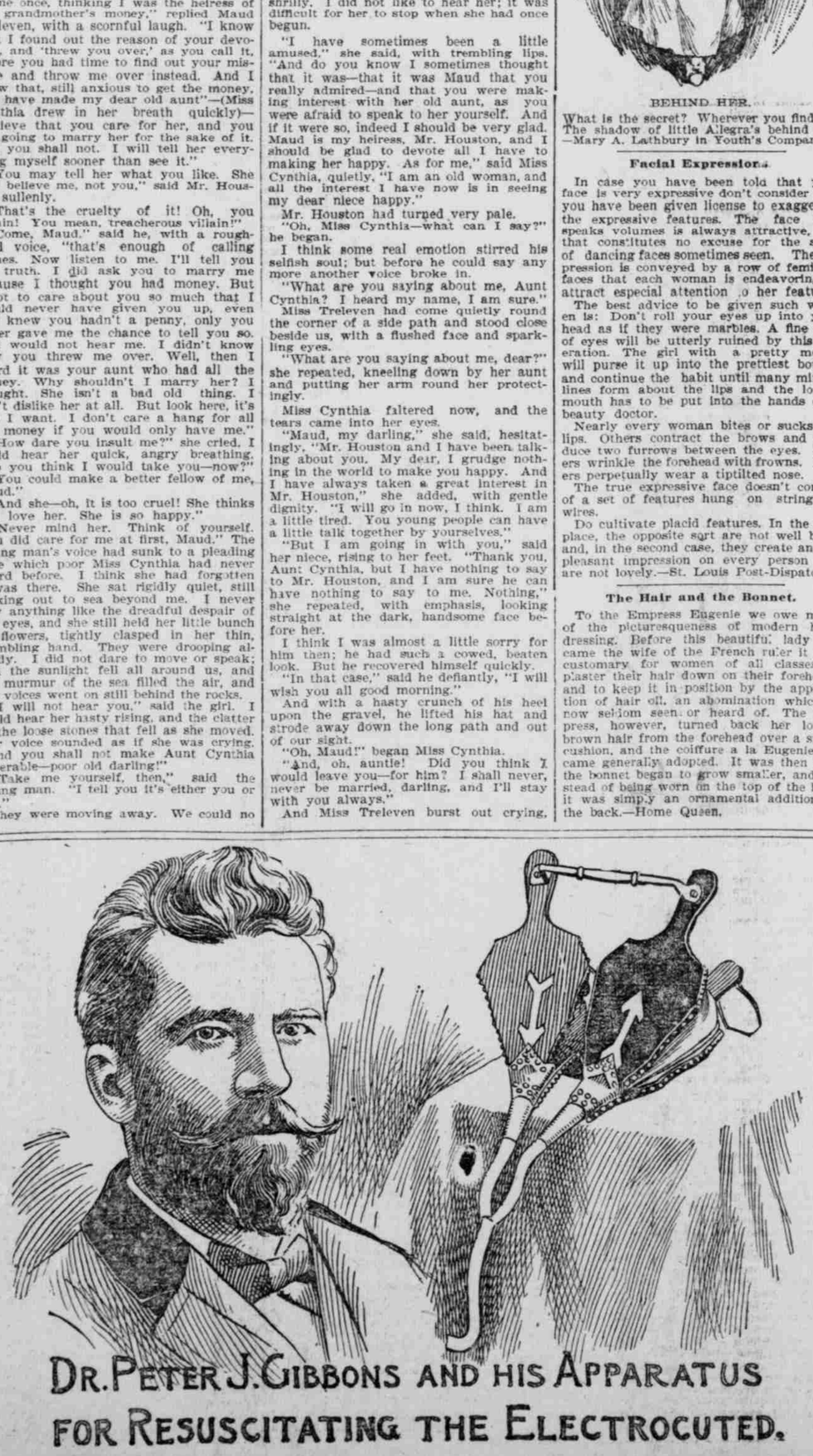
Nearly every woman bites or sucks her lips. Others contract the brows and produce two furrows between the eyes. Others wrinkle the forehead with frowns. Others perpetually wear a tiptilted nose.

The true expressive face doesn't consist of a set of features hung on strings or wires.

Do cultivate placid features. In the first place, the opposite sort are not well bred, and, in the second case, they create an unpleasant impression on every person and are not lovely.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The Hair and the Bonnet.

To the Empress Eugenie we owe much of the picturesqueness of modern hair-dressing. Before this beautiful lady became the wife of the French ruler it was customary for women of all classes to plaster their hair down on their foreheads and to keep it in position by the application of hair oil, an abomination which is now seldom seen or heard of. The empress, however, turned back her lovely brown hair from the forehead over a small cushion, and the coiffure a la Eugenie became generally adopted. It was then that the bonnet began to grow smaller, and instead of being worn on the top of the head it was simply an ornamental addition to the back.—Home Queen.



DR. PETER J. GIBBONS AND HIS APPARATUS FOR RESUSCITATING THE ELECTROCUTED.